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Editorial: Supporting our troops

It's no secret Kokomo takes pride in its veterans. According to the Census Bureau, between 2009 and 2013, 7,482 veterans called Howard County home, the highest per capita of any county in Indiana. During the same time period, 455,105 veterans lived in the Hoosier State.

So, it was disheartening for us to receive a press release from WalletHub, outlining just how lacking we have been in supporting our returning warriors. As May is Military Appreciation Month, the organization "conducted an in-depth analysis of 2015's Best and Worst States for Military Retirees." Out of all 50 states and Washington, D.C., here's how we shaped up:

- 37th in number of veterans per 100 inhabitants.
- 36th in number of Veterans Administration health facilities per number of veterans.
- 22nd in percentage of homeless veterans per number of veterans.
- 31st in job opportunities for veterans.
- 42nd in number of veteran-owned firms per 1,000 inhabitants.

- 49th in number of VA Benefits Administration facilities per number of veterans.
- 42nd in arts, leisure and recreation establishments per 100,000 inhabitants.
- 31st in percentage of population age 40 and older.

Add up all these statistics, and we're dead last. That's right, according to WalletHub, Indiana is currently the absolute worst state in the nation for military retirees. How pitiful.

But we in the City of Firsts have reason to hold our heads high, even as our state scrapes the bottom of the barrel in these rankings. For the past year, we have been actively tackling our state's higher-than-average homeless veteran population.

"Jackson Street Commons ... opened a year ago at the corner of Jackson Street and Apperson Way providing permanent housing for chronically homeless veterans," wrote Tribune reporter Carson Gerber May 4. "A year after its grand opening, all 27 apartments have been rented out by formerly homeless veterans who struggle with a physical or mental disability."

Memorial Day is Monday, which may simply mean a three-day weekend for some people. Kokomo residents should know well the meaning of the holiday centers around honoring those who have died while serving in our

armed forces. While those who serve our country are still with us, though, we should show them the respect they deserve. Don't let the bumper sticker slogan of "Support Our Troops" ring hollow.